SARON NEWSLETTER

Saron Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELCA)
510 Main Street
St. Joseph, Michigan 49085

Website: www.saronlutheran.org
Email: info@saronlutheran.org
Phone: 269-983-1273
Facebook:www.facebook.com/saronlutheranchurchst.joseph

The Rev. Joan Oleson, Pastor
Home: 269-983-2475
Email: oleson@saronlutheran.org

Marcus Roll, Senior Choir Director,
Bell Choir Director
Email: roll1mc@gmail.com
Irma Gorman, Organist
Margaret Froehlich, Administrative Assistant
Megan Savage, Financial Secretary
Email: financial@saronlutheran.org
Emily Gaul, Child Care

Typical Sunday Schedule at Saron:
During the School Year:
8:30 & 11:00 A.M. Worship
Childcare provided
9:40 Learning for Ages 2 – Adult

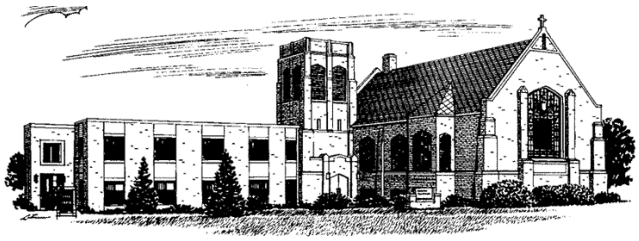
Summers (thru Labor Day weekend):
9:30 Holy Communion
Childcare provided
No Learning Hour

During the present Pandemic:
11:00 a.m. via Zoom
All are welcome!

We hold in prayer:
The Rev. Elizabeth Eaton,
Presiding Bishop, ELCA
The Rev. Dr. Craig Satterlee, Bishop of the
North/West Lower Michigan Synod, ELCA
The Episcopal Diocese of Western MI

Our Companion Synods:
Christian Lutheran Church of Honduras
Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea
Lutheran Church of Latvia

Saron's Mission:
Joyfully sharing God's love for all!!



As I write this it is less than three weeks 'il Easter. I look forward to singing the Alleluias once again, don't you? Even if it is virtual! There are so many great Easter hymns. One of (yes, one of) my favorites is "Christ Has Arisen." From Tanzania, it expresses the joy and the message of the day and of the season. Moreover, it expresses the joy of the Easter faith. I share with you its refrain, as we journey these last weeks to the day when that joy is expressed in its fulness once again, with all the alleluias. *Let us sing praise to him with endless joy. Death's fearful sting he has come to destroy. Our sin forgiving, alleluia! Jesus is living, alleluia!* (LW 364)

Pastor Joan

Holy Week

Palm/Passion Sunday – March 28, 11 AM via Zoom
Maundy Thursday – April 1, 7 PM via Zoom
"I Want Jesus to Walk with Me"
with Pastor Wayne Shearier, Holy Trinity, Niles
Good Friday – April 2, 7 PM via Zoom
"Were You There?"
The Vigil of Easter – April 3, 7 PM via Zoom
The Resurrection of our Lord, Easter – April 4, 11 AM via Zoom.

When Will We Meet in Person Again?

Your church council asks this question each month. Like you, it is our deepest desire to worship in-person again. At our March council meeting we decided it is not quite time to do that. The number of cases in Berrien County are still too high; guidelines from the CDC and our governor suggest waiting a little longer is a better option. In the meantime, we are working to be ready, to have the building in order and the people power ready to open with the greatest safety measures in place when it is time to do so. More details regarding this decision are being sent out in our weekly mailing (either by email or with the printed bulletin.)

Outdoor Small Group Holy Communion

As nicer weather returns, we will again be offering small gathering Worship with Holy Communion in the courtyard. Weather permitting, our first gatherings will be the week following Easter. Watch for details. If you do not get email, please call the church office of your interest and we will notify you of the events.

Caring and Sharing

In Our Prayers –

Richard Schalon is at the Whitcomb Tower Retirement Center, St. Joseph; **Bernice Koski** is at Woodland Terrace.

Office Hours at Saron (these hours will vary during Covid-19)

Margaret (secretary): Mon-Tues, 9 AM - 1 PM
Weds of Newsletter Week, 9 AM - 1 PM
Volunteers: Weds, 9:15 AM - 11 AM (approximately)
Megan Savage(financial secy); Tues & Thurs 5:30 PM
financial@saronlutheran.org

When Pastor is out of town, emergency pastoral care information can be obtained by calling the church office (983.1273) or contacting the president of the congregation.

Note: E-mails meant for Pastor should be addressed to oleson@saronlutheran.org. E-mails to Margaret and the church office should be addressed to info@saronlutheran.org.

Happy Birthday Wishes to Saron's Members in April 2021

April 1- Shadden Talbert-Gulley
3 - Brian Culverhouse
4 – Shawn de la Foret
Elizabeth Gaspari
8 - Janet Larson
11 - Alaina Bradley
13 - Marilyn Lucy
14 - Lorelei Gorman
Brandon Borr
15 - Carleen Knauf
Corinne Ondraka (Olson)
19 - Robert Kynast
Debra Adams-Hurst
21 - Fritz Knauf
Andy Wedde
22 - Addison Osgood
23 – Juliet Jacob
Ava Osgood
25 - Clem Brueck
Gayle Peterson
26 - Tom Siewert
Michael Breyen
27 - Linda Pater
28 - Brooke Henderson

"God's Blessings for a very happy day and year round."
For additions or corrections, please call the church office at 983-1273. Thank you.

FAREWELL AND GODSPEED

On March 22, we offer a blessing of Farewell and Godspeed to Darlene Kiessel who is moving to California to be near her daughter. We are happy for her in this move but we will miss her. Darlene plans to remain active in Saron from afar.

FORTIFY & fly

To say a lot has happened in the last few years, would be a massive understatement. That's why it's vital to occasionally take a step back and assess where we stand compared to the original plan. Council is doing just that in regards to Fortify & Fly, reviewing the big picture provided in the original Fortify and Fly fundraising stage, in order to identify solid steps for the projects that still need to be completed. No campaign promise will be left behind! The worship enhancement task force is also making steady progress in addressing accessibility for the worship space.

As of the end of February 2021, we had collected $335,575 towards our 3 year pledge total of $367,205. That's 91% of our goal! Thank you for living your commitment even after all the changes we've seen since the end of 2018.

Worship

FACEBOOK

We love to share pictures of Saron's ministry on our Facebook page and we get great feedback. It is our practice not to put names with the pictures. If you have questions, or prefer your picture not to appear, please contact Pastor.

SUNDAY SCRIPTURE READINGS

As you prepare for worship, you are invited to read and reflect on the Scriptures for the day.

Thu. Apr. 1 —
Maundy Thursday
Exodus 12:1-4-10 11-14
Psalm 116:1-2, 12-19
1 Corinthians 11:23-26
John 13:1-17, 31b-35

Fri. Apr. 2 —
Good Friday
Isaiah 52:13—53:12
Psalm 22
Hebrews 10:16-25
John 18:1—19:42

Sun. Apr. 4 —
Resurrection of Our Lord Easter Sunday
Isaiah 25:6-9
Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24
Acts 10:34-43
Mark 16:1-8

Sun. Apr. 11 —
Second Sunday of Easter
Acts 4:32-35
Psalm 133
1 John 1:1—2:2
John 20:19-31

Sun. Apr. 18 —
Third Sunday of Easter
Acts 3:12-19
Psalm 4
1 John 3:1-7
Luke 24:36b-48

Youth

Are you in grades 6-12? Please join us for youth group activities! For more info, contact Scott at *scottgaspari@outlook.com or (Cell) 847-373-8825.*

LEARNING

Saron is a congregation seeking to become more fluent in the first language of faith, the language of Scripture, in order that we might live into our calling as a people renewed, enlivened, empowered and sent by the Word.

Tuesday Evening Men's Bible Study

Saron Men's Tuesday Bible Study will resume on Tuesday, April 6 at 6:00pm using Zoom. We will continue our study of Acts. We will send you the links for Zoom as we get closer. For more information, feel free to contact either Bob Kynast at 269-921-2786 or Don Hafer at 269-986-3637.

As the Bible says: "As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another" (Proverbs 27:17).

Bob Kynast
bobkynast@gmail.com
269-921-2786

1ST SUNDAY BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP

April 11th, 6:30 (note change of date from April 4th) we will meet via ZOOM to tackle "Waking up White and Finding Myself in the Story of Race", by Debby Irving. Irving shares her struggle to understand racism and racial tensions. She offers fresh perspective on bias, stereotypes, manners and tolerance. She brings the idea of "White Privilege" to the forefront of this book. Her book is an "invitation to learn" (book jacket). We encourage everyone interested to join in the ZOOM. Your ideas will be welcome. ZOOM sign-on information will be sent to all who have expressed interest in the book group. If you wish to be included or have questions, please contact Kathy Cowall (269) 428-0354 or kcowall@hotmail.com.

On May 2nd, we will finish our season with "The Dutch House" by Ann Patchett. Patchett weaves a story about a big house, a family, acts of cruelty and kindness over three generations of said family. "What do people acquire, keep, lose or give away and what do they leave behind?" (book jacket) Patchett addresses all this and more in her unique style. Does she do it well? You decide. Come, read, talk and share your ideas. Everyone is always welcome.

"You can borrow a book, but you get to keep the ideas." (Anonymous)

Men's monthly Bible Devotions and Breakfast

Men's Bible Devotion will NOT meet in April it is Holy Week. Contact Dennis Lundgren for more information.

THURSDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY

The Thursday Study will resume their studies again on April 8. At that time we will continue our study of Rob Bell's book, "What is the Bible?" We meet each Thursday morning at 9:30 via Zoom. Please contact Pastor if you would like Zoom info or need information about purchasing a book. This is a great time to invite someone who lives at a distance and can join us via the internet! There are times when we have participants from 5 different states. What a joy!

THE BIBLE IN A YEAR

Have you ever wanted to read through the entire Bible in a year? Or do it again? A group of about 7 folks from Saron are doing just that. If you would like to join in, contact Pastor.

Women of the ELCA

Deborah Circle will meet by way of Zoom on Wednesday, April 14, 2021, at 7:00 p.m. Linda Pater will lead the study which will be from Gather magazine, January/February 2021 issue, Session Two, page 36, titled Journeys with Angels: turnaround angels. Zoom information will be e-mailed to everyone by Colleen Lundgren. A study leader is needed for May 12. If interested, call Melanie at 1-269-449-8399.

Hospitality

Watch for more news as we get closer to getting back together in the building.

Outreach

BENTON HARBOR SOUP KITCHEN

January was a cold, snowy month so there were less guests at the Soup Kitchen. But those who braved the cold enjoyed a sack lunch prepared by Saron volunteers Deb Standen, Coanne Hohman, Sarah Burrows and Soup Kitchen helpers.

Hunger in our community is an ongoing concern and the Soup Kitchen is open 7 days a week to provide a meal to anyone who is in need, If you feel comfortable helping prepare a sack lunch for the Soup Kitchen please contact Kathie Bradley (269-921-4665].

Thank you to all who continue to support this ministry with your time, contributions, & prayers. During this pandemic it is even more important to continue Saron's mission of *Joyfully sharing God's love for all!*

After the self-quarantine large cans of fruit are always needed at the Soup Kitchen & can be dropped off anytime at the church. Any questions or to volunteer or provide cookies at a later date please contact Kathie Bradley at 269-921-4665.

INCLUSIVITY TASK FORCE

Thank you to all who are joining the conversations that will help in the discernment of becoming a more intentionally inclusive community of faith. These discussions are ongoing. They will help us discern the possibility of becoming a Reconciling in Christ congregation.

Watch for a special Inclusivity newsletter with updates, summaries of gatherings, resources and a questionnaire to help the task force plan future gatherings and needs. Folks with email will receive the newsletter via electronic means. Those without will receive a hard copy in the mail.

The next gathering will be Sunday, April 25, at 1 pm. Our guest will be the Rev. Michael Wernick, pastor of Ascension Lutheran, and rector of Holy Cross Episcopal, both in Kentwood, MI. Pastor Mike will share his story. The Zoom link will be sent out closer to the time of the gathering.

At any time, we encourage you to contact a member of the team with any of your questions/comments/ wonderings. You may also visit the reconciling works website at reconcilingworks.org. Here is task force contact information.

Connor Ashley cashley1837@outlook.com
Laurel Gacek 269/470-6062 mlmg2445@sbcglobal.net
Laura Hicks 517/930-0579 lhicks42@gmail.com
Darlene Kiessel 269/313-4062 kiessel@me.com
Diane Madej (Open Hearts. Open Church, N/WLM Synod) 231/670-0328 dianemadej234@gmail.com
Pastor Joan Oleson 269/983-1273
oleson@saronlutheran.org

Here is Saron's proposed Welcome Statement, as affirmed by the council.

"As a community of faith who joyfully shares God's love for all, we believe our lives and faith are strengthened by diversity. We strive to be a community who welcomes people of every ability, age, citizenship status, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, language, marital status, political perspective, race, and sexual orientation. Whatever life's circumstance, we openly welcome and value you. We celebrate God's unconditional love and respond joyfully to your presence here. All are welcome. You are welcome."

Living Water Ministries Virtual 5K

Living Water Ministries, our synod's camping ministry, is sponsoring its first-ever virtual 5k event, benefiting the Living Water Ministries Scholarship Fund! May 5th is the date, although you can walk/run anytime from May 1 – May 8. The goal is to raise at least $5,000 to help bolster outreach efforts and help more kids to go to camp. Your participation will help Living Water Ministries build capacity to welcome new campers when we return in 2022 – which is sure to be the best season ever!

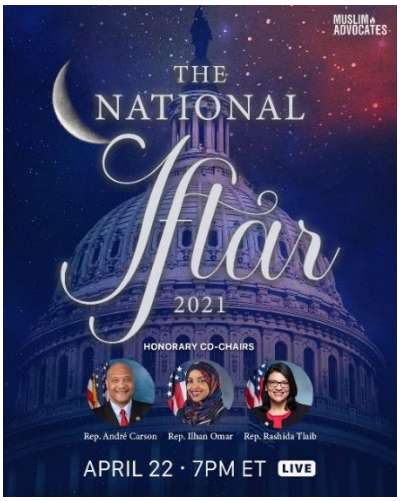
Whether you are a seasoned runner, an avid walker or an individual looking for a fun, personal challenge, Living Water Ministries is grateful for your participation! All registrants will receive an exclusive LWM $5k/5k t-shirt along with a participant medal to recognize your support of Living Water Ministries! Cost of the event is a $50 donation. For more information and to register, go to https://elcalivingwater.kindful.com/register/the-5k-5k-2021.

Interfaith Action

Interfaith Action (swmichiganinterfaith.org) is a coalition of over 40 faith communities in Allegan, Berrien, Cass, St. Joseph, and Van Buren Counties. Some members of Saron attend their meetings and work with various task force groups. One of the goals of Interfaith Action is to promote understanding and respect for diversity. We hope this discussion will advance that goal by enriching our appreciation for our shared humanity.

Here is an opportunity to learn more about our Muslim siblings and their traditions by joining in a virtual Iftar celebration.

The National Iftar 2021
Hosted by every Muslim member of Congress
Virtual Event- Thursday, April 22nd at 7pm EST



"Fasting is one of the five pillars of the Islamic faith, and during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan, Muslims fast every day from sunrise to sunset. The pre-dawn meal is known as *Suhoor*, and the fast-breaking meal eaten after sunset is called *Iftar*." (peacecatalyst.org)

You're invited to the nationwide virtual Ramadan celebration. Muslim Advocates is honored to invite you to The National Iftar, co-hosted by Rep. André Carson, Rep. Ilhan Omar and Rep. Rashida Tlaib.

Last year's celebration was so extraordinary and it's happening again — with new history-making speakers, stirring performances for all ages and an intimate conversation with the three Muslim members of Congress on the most pressing issues of our times.

Registration is free, but required. Registration and more information here or https://thenationaliftar.org/?emci=19c241c4-527d-eb11-85aa-00155d43c992&emdi=c3b2c8b0-b27d-eb11-85aa-00155d43c992&ceid=9605195

This one-of-a-kind online event was described by last year's attendees as "encouraging," "uplifting" and "truly special." And this year's celebration will be even more memorable!

Support

Tax Incentives during the Covid-19 Pandemic

"Above-the-line" tax deduction for charitable contributions

The federal government recently passed legislation to provide financial relief to families as a result of Covid-19. As part of the CARES Act, for the purpose of increasing the work of charitable organizations, individual taxpayers will receive new tax incentives for making charitable donations. The provision encourages individuals to contribute to religious, charitable, and educational organizations by creating a new "above-the-line" deduction (i.e. for taxpayers who take the standard deduction). This deduction permits deduction of up to $300 of annual monetary contributions.

This is applicable for tax years beginning after 2019, and does not sunset after 2020. A related provision increases the limitations on deductions for charitable contributions by individuals who do itemize. For those individuals, the 50% of adjusted gross income limitation is suspended for cash contributions made in 2020.

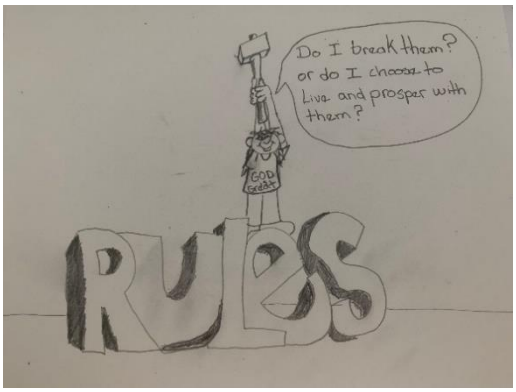
For members over 72 years old drawing income from an IRA, the Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) is waived for 2020, thereby reducing your tax burden.

Effective January 1, 2020, the CARES Act waived RMDs for defined contribution 401(k) plans, 403(b) plans, governmental 457(b) plans, and IRAs for calendar year 2020. The waiver applies to RMDs to be made in 2020 and to 2019 RMDs that were due by April 1, 2020 (if not already made in 2019). The good news is that Qualified Charitable Distributions can still be made directly from an IRA account to the church that will both benefit our ministry and reduce the member's taxable income. As always, members are advised to check with their tax advisor for the latest information and interpretations before filing.

STOCK DONATIONS

Saron partners with TD Ameritrade, a brokerage firm, to accept stock donations. If you would like to donate stock, email Joe Ulrey to receive more information. Thanks! Joe Ulrey josephulrey@yahoo.com

Assembling the new filing system shelves



Did You Know?

Our noisy offering dollars help support the ELCA World Hunger program.

Working with and through our congregations, in the United States, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands Lutheran churches overseas and other partners, ***ELCA World Hunger*** *is uniquely positioned to reach communities in need. From health clinics to microloans, water wells to animal husbandry, community meals to advocacy, your gifts to ELCA World Hunger make it possible for the ELCA to respond, supporting sustainable solutions that get at the root causes of hunger and poverty.* (From elca.org)

Our "noisy" offerings have been pretty silent these days, as we have not gathered to bring those offerings. Please consider saving those coins (and quiet bills) to bring when we join together in-person again.

For more information: https://elca.org/Our-Work/Relief-and-Development/ELCA-World-Hunger

SARON LUTHERAN CHURCH
510 MAIN STREET
ST. JOSEPH, MI 49085

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Email:info@saronlutheran.org

A Congregation of:
The North/West Lower Michigan Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

April 2021

Holy Week
Palm/Passion Sunday – March 28, 11 AM via Zoom
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April 2021

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 *MaundyThursday* 7:00 p.m. Worship Via Zoom	**2** *Good Friday* 7:00 p.m. Worship Via Zoom	**3** *The Vigil of Easter* 7:00 p.m. Worship Via Zoom
4 *Easter Sunday* Worship at 11:00 a.m. Via Zoom	**5** 11:00 a.m. Prayer Time (in homes)	**6** 6:00 p.m. Men's Bible Study Via Zoom	**7**	**8** 9:30 a.m. Bible Study Via Zoom	**9**	10
11 Worship at 11:00 a.m. Via Zoom Confirmation 9:30 Via zoom Sunday School 9:10 via Zoom 6:30 p.m. 1st Sunday Book Discussion Group	**12** 11:00 a.m. Prayer Time (in homes) 6:00 p.m. Support Comm. Via Zoom Newsletter Articles due	**13** 6:00 p.m. Men's Bible Study Via Zoom	**14** 7:00 p.m. Deborah Circle Meeting by Via Zoom Linda Pater will lead the study	***15*** 9:30 a.m. Bible Study Via Zoom	**16**	17
18 Worship at 11:00 a.m. Via Zoom Confirmation 9:30 Via zoom	**19** 11:00 a.m. Prayer Time (in homes) 7:00 p.m. Church Council Meeting by Via Zoom	**20** 6:00 p.m. Men's Bible Study Via Zoom	**21**	**22** 9:30 a.m. Bible Study Via Zoom	**23**	24
25 Worship at 11:00 a.m. Via Zoom Confirmation 9:30 Via zoom	**26** 11:00 a.m. Prayer Time (in homes)	**27** 6:00 p.m. Men's Bible Study Via Zoom	**28**	**29** 9:30 a.m. Bible Study Via Zoom	**30**	

IF YOU ARE NOT RECEIVING ZOOM INVITATIONS AND WOULD LIKE TO, PLEASE CONTACT PASTOR JOAN AT oleson@saronlutheran.org